

Imagining Asianfuturism(s)

Edmond Y. Chang

What is Asianfuturism? What critiques, challenges, and possibilities of Asian-futurist texts, media, and worlds? How might we answer the question Dawn Chan asks, in this case thinking about Asian American art, "Is it possible to be othered across time? For almost a century already, the myth of an Asian-inflected future has infiltrated imaginations worldwide." This course takes up these provocations and surveys a range of Asian American "speculative" literature, broadly conceived, as political and vernacular theory, as strategies for thinking critically about the past, present, and future in order to imagine what this world (and others) would be like under different conditions and configurations of race, gender, sexuality, ability, environment, technology, and other formations. As Betsy Huang suggests in *Contesting Genres in Contemporary Asian American Literature*, SF "affords Asian American writers a unique way to engage in subversive political and ideological critique not by contravening genre conventions, but by using them to rewrite the rules of the genre." Therefore, we will engage literature and media, some overtly science fictional and some not, that imagine alternative, even radical narratives, desires, relationships, and futures.

Assignments

Critical Essay & Questions Presentation and Roundtable (20%)

You will be a required to sign up for an oral presentation (in pairs or small groups) during the course of the semester. For your presentation, you will read the texts assigned for a particular week, research a scholarly essay relevant to

the texts and course, distribute the essay to the class the week prior, generate a critical question or two, and get the class discussion started for the day. Curations should have a group presentation plan, a substantive framing post, may include media, and each group member must contribute to the discussion and post.

Critical Response Papers (30%)

The majority of the writing you will do for this class is in the form of short, critical, analytical response papers. These single-spaced, one-page writings serve as reactions to, close readings of, analyses of, and articulations of the texts and connections you see, read, and talk about in class. These responses are more than just summaries or personal reactions and will be graded on clarity, focus, coherence, critique, and your ability to concisely formulate arguments. You will be required to generate a response paper approximately every other week for a **total of 6**. See the response paper prompt for more details.

Creative Response (10%)

Not only will you be reading SF of color, but you will also generate a creative response to demonstrate the ideas, goals, and critiques of the texts of the course. You will create your own “_____ Futurism” short-short story, narrative poem, or drawing. The creative response will be evaluated on completion and your thoughtful engagement with the prompt. The creative response will be turned in and published on the course Blackboard.

Critical Review (10%)

At the end of the term, you will write a short, 500 word, single-spaced critical review of a text not covered by the course that you believe fits the critical, theoretical, and intellectual stakes of this class. You will locate a text, close read the text, and generate an academic critique and assessment of the text’s value for study. In other words, what text might you include in a class like ours? You **must** have your text **approved** by the instructor. The critical review will be turned in and published on the course Blackboard.

Participation and Preparedness (30%)

Preparedness and participation forms a large component of your final grade. It is essential that you prepare for class, attend class, and participate. Missing class or participation may seriously compromise your ability to do well in this class. Moreover, negative participation will hurt your participation grade. Participation is determined by 1) your **respectful** presence in class and interactions with me and others, 2) your **willingness** to discuss, comment, and ask questions, 3) your **preparation** for class, which includes having the required materials and doing all of the assigned reading or work for class, 4) your **engagement** and **collaboration** in group work, presentations, office hours, and course events, and 5) your care of and contribution to the class *Blackboard* or “Bb”—bookmark the address, check regularly, comment as required, and think of the blog as an extension of class.

Course Syllabus

Week 1:

Introduction to the Course & Syllabus

Defining Asian American SF and Asianfuturism

Chan, "Tomorrow Never Dies"

Chang, "Musings on Asianfuturism,"

<http://www.edmondchang.com/2020/04/27/musings-on-asianfuturism/>

"Yellow Peril," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow_Peril

Jack London, "The Unparalleled Invasion" (1910)

<http://london.sonoma.edu/writings/StrengthStrong/invasion.html>

Week 2:

Alex Raymond, *Flash Gordon* (1934, excerpt)

Robert Heinlein, *The Sixth Column* (1941, excerpt)

Dery, "Black to the Future"

Betsy Huang, "Reorientations: On Asian American Science Fiction"

Tchen, "Asian," *Keywords*

Week 3:

Toshio Mori, *Yokohama, California* (1949)

Gruesz, "America," *Keywords*

Berlant, "Citizenship," *Keywords*

Week 4:

Star Trek, "Errand of Mercy" (1967)

S.P. Somtow, "The Thirteenth Utopia" (1979)

Ferguson, "Race," *Keywords*

Week 5:

Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (1976)

Wu, "Gender," *Keywords*

Week 6:

Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (cont.)

Halberstam, "Gender," *Keywords*

Week 7:

Blade Runner (1982)

Sayers, "Technology," *Keywords*

Week 8:

Robot Stories (2003)

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Ted Chiang, "Story of Your Life" (1998)

Vandana Singh, "Occasional Writer: An Interview with Science Fiction Author

Ted Chiang"

Prashad, "Orientalism," *Keywords*

McPherson, "Digital," *Keywords*

Week 9:

Larissa Lai, *Salt Fish Girl* (2002)

Cherniavsky, "Body," *Keywords*

Week 10:

Larissa Lai, *Salt Fish Girl* (cont.)

Somerville, "Queer," *Keywords*

Week 11:

Gene Luen Yang & Sonny Liew, *The Shadow Hero* (2014)

Majorie Liu & Sana Takeda, *Monstress* (2015)

Henderson, "Representation," *Keywords*

Week 12:

Larissa Lai, *The Tiger Flu* (2018)

Tongson, "Queer," *Keywords*

Week 13:

Larissa Lai, *The Tiger Flu* (cont.)

Adams, Reiss, Serlin, "Disability," *Keywords*

Week 14:

Even the Ocean (2016): https://store.steampowered.com/app/265470/Even_the_Ocean/

Night Flyer (2020): <https://mikeyren.itch.io/nightflyer>

Sephonie (2021): <https://store.steampowered.com/app/1248840/Sephonie/>

Alston, "Environment," *Keywords*

Payne, "Play," *Keywords*

Week 15:

Davis, "How Black Women Are Reshaping Afrofuturism,"

<https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-justice/2020/04/24/how-black-women-are-reshaping-afrofuturism/>

Dillon, "Imagining Indigenous Futurisms"

Merla-Watson, "The Altermundos of Latin@futurism,"

<https://www.alluvium-journal.org/2017/03/15/the-altermundos-of-latinfuturism/>

Baccolini, "The Persistence of Hope in Dystopian Science Fiction"